

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4402

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COMMITTEE

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
COMMITTEE

March 9, 2011

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Salazar,

I am writing in regard to your Secretarial Order No. 3310 which reexamines procedures for the protection of wilderness characteristics on land under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The order was unexpected and another example of a top-down, Washington-driven approach to public lands issues that fails to recognize the importance of local input and what is best for states and communities.

There is a better way to approach stewardship of public lands. I have advocated an approach where all stakeholders participate that offers a path forward to resolve these issues. A bottom-up, locally-driven process works best whether in implementation of an administrative proposal or development of legislation. This approach may take significant time and effort, but it allows the complexity of public lands issues to be addressed in a way that builds consensus and receives broad local support.

I believe that this order also represents a departure from our previous discussions regarding the Administration's support of a locally-driven stakeholder approach to public lands issues. Specifically, on October 1, 2009, when BLM Director Bob Abbey testified before the House Natural Resources Committee, he voiced support for legislation that is "home-grown" and "geographically-focused" as was consistent with the Washington County Growth and Conservation Act. In particular, Director Abbey mentioned the legislation as a milestone in Utah regarding public lands issues. Additionally, in February of 2010, when a draft list of monument designations was leaked from the Department of Interior, including several in Utah, I wrote to you condemning any discussions that did not involve stakeholders in local communities. I referenced the lingering anger in our state from a 1996 monument designation in Utah. On February 22, 2010, you responded stating, "I also believe that any new designations and conservation initiatives work best when they build on local efforts to better manage places that are important to nearby communities."

I believe that this Secretarial Order undermines local efforts in Utah, is a heavy-handed decision and creates economic uncertainty for our communities. I believe it is fair and imperative that we resolve the discrepancies between the Administration's actions regarding public lands issues in Utah and throughout the country. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim Matheson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jim" and last name "Matheson" clearly distinguishable.

JIM MATHESON
Member of Congress